

THE ISLAMIC FRONTIER IN THE EAST: EXPANSION INTO SOUTH ASIA

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The purpose of this brief essay is, first, to describe some areas of recent research in the pre-Mughal or what is often termed the Delhi Sultanate period of South Asian history, and secondly, to put forward interpretations which diverge somewhat from apparently widely accepted conclusions about the period. Those interpretations suggested are really tentative hypotheses aimed at arousing interest and perhaps even controversy in what is a badly-neglected historical field. The coverage of the literature here is not exhaustive, as it would be in a bibliographic essay, nor confined to a few new works, as in a review essay, but rather reflects the writer's own explorations over the past decade.

Muslim expansion into South Asia is one of the most important and prolonged instances of cultural encounter to be found in world history. Beginning as early as the fourth decade of the seventh Christian century, this process has not yet ended—as the recent political history of South Asia testifies. Indeed, the extended interaction between two radically different civilizations, Islamic and Hindu/Buddhist, is comparable to the similar encounter of Muslim and Christian civilizations.¹ European and Middle Eastern historians have long recognized the complexity, severity and intensity of the clash between the two civilizations. The concept of the frontier, a zone of military, political and cultural interaction, existing through long periods of time, and moving across space has greatly stimulated and assisted historians and other scholars.² However, those scholars concerned with Indo-Muslim history have been much less aware of a parallel frontier on the eastern flank of expanding Islam. Often, if they have noticed the existence of a military/political frontier in the Sultanate period, they have ignored the continuity of this phenomenon from the seventh to the twelfth centuries A.D. The time depth, the continuity, and the cultural significance of this enormous human encounter have been thus underrated.

In part this abbreviated view of the frontier can be attributed to the relative lack of systematic research in the period 600 to 1200 A.D.—especially from a dual perspective using both Persian and Sanskrit sources. Perhaps also because of a paucity of written source materials, such episodes as the Ghaznavid presence in

¹ Hindu/Buddhist is not a purely religious term but is meant to imply that the predominant high cultural forms of this civilization were primarily derived from these two religions.

² Several generations of historians of the

Ottomans have been stimulated by the work of Paul Wittek in his *The Rise of the Ottoman Empire*. Wittek's views on the western frontier have helped to shape the consciousness of all who have studied this period.

Kabul, Peshawar, and the Panjab have been little studied thus far. In part, this foreshortened perspective also derives from a tendency to assume that the cultural boundary of South Asian civilization in the seventh century A.D. was coterminous with the apparent physical markers of the subcontinent. That the cultural and at times political reach of South Asian civilization stretched to the west beyond the Sulaiman and Kirthar mountain ranges is a point which is little noticed. Finally, our perception of this bitter conflict has also been influenced by two complementary historiographical tendencies. Most present-day historians have been anxious to avoid simplistic modes of explanation which attribute cause to purely religious elements. Thus instead of discussing a "Muslim conquest" they have preferred to speak of a conquest carried out by groups of people who happened to be Muslims. Modern historians have also been affected by the communal holocaust of Partition and more recent communal tragedies on the subcontinent. Most responsible historians, whether European or South Asian, have been understandably disinterested in increasing communal hatred. Thus, they have chosen to neglect serious study of the military struggle and its effects, in favour of attempts to stress peaceful modes of Muslim expansion and the relatively tranquil *rapprochement* achieved between the two communities once Muslim domination had been established. My own view is that by this time, three decades after Partition, it should be possible to take a more objective view of the extended military and political struggle which did last for centuries. Moreover, a more sober understanding of the continuity of this conflict should put contemporary difficulties into perspective.

Despite the frequent emphasis upon peaceful forms of Muslim settlement in South Asia, by traders and Sufi missionaries, it is clear that the most substantial Muslim settlement was achieved by conquest. Incessant raiding, leading to invasions, followed by conquest is the typical pattern for the movement of Arabs and, later, Central Asian peoples into the subcontinent. Muslim war bands and armies pressed east and south against successive Buddhist or Hindu rulers. During this early period, the Muslim contingents consisted of military commanders and their followers (the former often becoming kings), supported by administrators, clerks and *ulema*.

The conventional view, put forward in the textbooks and general histories of South Asia, is that this process occurred in three distinct phases, each ending with the defeat of the indigenous ruler. First came the Arab conquest of Sind in the early eighth century. Nearly three hundred years later the demoralizing raids in depth of Mahmud of Ghazni were accompanied by the occupation of the Panjab. Finally, in 1191-92, Muhammad of Ghur's conquest of Delhi led to a breakthrough into the eastern Gangetic plain. It is only after this latter episode, when Aryavarta or Hindustan itself finally fell, that we can speak of true conquest. Thus in a text book devoted to the Muslim experience in South Asia and frequently used for undergraduate teaching, S. M. Ikram writes:

The Arab conquest of Sind and southwestern Panjab was completed by 714, and during the following three centuries there was no further extension of Muslim dominion. The second phase of Muslim expansion, beginning with the establishment of a Turkish Muslim dynasty in Ghazni, followed the traditional north-western routes for the invasion of India.³

³ S. M. Ikram, *Muslim Civilization in India*, ed. Ainslie T. Embree, (New York, 1964), p. 37.

Other standard works such as the revised *Oxford History of India* follow this conventional interpretation.⁴

Nevertheless, although such a simplified version of the Muslim advance may be convenient and easily memorized, it remains distorted. The first clashes between Muslim Arab and Buddhist or Hindu horsemen (whether Turks or ethnic remnants of the Ephthalite Huns) which took place early in the seventh century (on the border of newly overrun Seistan) established a military frontier between the two opposed civilizations. Back and forth skirmishes and raids, punctuated by incursions in depth, followed. Not all victories went to the Muslims; often the defenders mounted successful large-scale raids in their turn. Yet slowly, almost inexorably, the attackers made breakthroughs in the line of defense which resulted in the acquisition of new territory. Gradually, therefore, over the centuries the line of interaction moved east and south.⁵ Finally, after consolidating a position at Delhi, the Sultans of Delhi were in a position to marshal the agrarian and human resources of the Indo-Gangetic plain. When directed toward expansion, the resources of the Delhi state achieved enormous territorial gains in the fourteenth century—the period from which effective Muslim domination of the subcontinent is usually dated.

Throughout this seven hundred year period, we do not find victorious Arab and Turkish horsemen engaged in a series of slaughters of supine Hindu warriors. In a 1965 article, A. L. Srivastava, a noted historian of the Delhi Sultanate period has challenged the view that Muslim victories were gained by default over fragmented, quarrelling Hindu rajas who offered little real resistance.⁶ The general collapse of resistance in the Gangetic valley after the second battle of Tarain (1192 A.D.) was not typical of the military qualities of the Hindus. On the contrary: for Srivastava cites recurring instances when Hindu and Buddhist kings and warriors offered stubborn resistance against repeated Arab and Turkish attacks. To support his position Srivastava emphasizes both the duration and the intensity of the struggle. He divides the conflict into four distinct phases: the battle for Sind (636-713 A.D.); the battle for Afghanistan (643-870 A.D.); the struggle for the Panjab (870-1030 A.D.); and the occupation of the Gangetic valley (1175-1206 A.D.).⁷ In each of these phases the Muslims advanced only after overcoming vigorous and prolonged defensive action by indigenous armies. Thus, in the war for Sind, successive Arab expeditions raided both the land and sea frontiers of that kingdom for seventy-five years before the final conquest.⁸

⁴ Cf. Vincent Smith, *The Oxford History of India* (Oxford, rev. ed., 1958), p. 232: "The Muslim conquest of India did not begin until the last quarter of the twelfth century, if the frontier provinces of Kabul, the Panjab, and Sind be excluded from consideration."

⁵ This frontier line is in point of fact an historical region as defined by Burton Stein. Stein moves from a definition of a region offered by Joseph Schwartzberg, as "a perceived segment of the time-space continuum differentiated from others on the basis of one or more defining characteristics" (Joseph E. Schwartzberg, "Prolegomena to the Study of South Asian Regions and Regionalism" in *Regions and Regionalism in South Asian Studies*, ed. Robert I. Crane (Durham, N.C.,

1966), p. 93. Stein comments: "Going back to the refined definition of region offered by Schwartzberg, in which space and time are seen as axes along which regionally differentiating data must be plotted, I would state that an historical region is one in which any characteristic or related characteristics undergo some basic change in distribution patterns or boundary condition." Burton Stein, "Comments . . .", in Crane (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 44.

⁶ A. L. Srivastava, "A Survey of India's Resistance to Medieval Invaders from the North-West: Causes of Eventual Hindu Defeat", *Journal of Indian History*, XLIII (1965), 349-68.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 350.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 351.

Continuity of resistance can be readily demonstrated. An analysis of standard secondary works reveals a military encounter—a raid, battle or campaign—sizable enough to be recorded in the sources for almost every decade between 636 and 1296 A.D. Between the first Arab assault on Sind to the beginning of Alauddin Khilji's spectacular raids into the Deccan, we can list over ninety distinct military clashes. A partial listing is supplied in the following table:⁹

DATE (app.) AGGRESSOR	REGION or TOWN	COMMANDER	SOURCE and DETAILS
<i>7th Century</i>			
636 Muslim	Tanah, near Bombay	Caliph Umar	Ray, I, 6: major naval raid.
650 Muslim	Zaranj	Caliph Uthman	Ray, I, 6-7: city of Zabul occupied by Muslims.
662 Muslim	Bust	Ibn Samarah	Ray, I, 66: Bust occupied; Kabul garrisoned.
670 Hindu	Kabul	unknown	Ray, I, 67: Hindus recapture Kabul.
680 Hindu	Kabul	Ratbil Yazid ibn Ziyad	Ray, I, 67: Hindu raiding parties harrass Muslims.
692 Muslim	Bust	Abu Dulhah Ratbil	Ray, I, 68: Bust retaken by Muslim expedition.
694 Muslim	Kabul	Ibn Abi-Makrah Ratbil	Ray, I, 68-9: major Muslim seige fails to retake Kabul.
<i>8th Century</i>			
708 Muslim	Sijistan	Qutayba ibn Muslim Ratbil	Ray, I, 69: major punitive raid against Ratbil.
710 Muslim	Ceylon	al-Hajjaj	Ray, I, 7: raid on island.
713 Muslim	Multan	Muh. ibn al-Qasim	Ray, I, 7-8: Islamic conquest of urban Sind completed.

⁹ Abbreviations in the table refer as follows:

Al-Baladhuri	F. C. Murgotten (trans.), <i>Origins of the Islamic State</i> (New York, 1924), II.	EHM	Muhammad Latif, <i>The Early History of Multan</i> (Lahore, 1903).
EI ²	C. E. Bosworth, "Ghazna", <i>The Encyclopedia of Islam</i> (new ed., Leiden, 1965), II, 1048-50.	HCIP	R. C. Majumdar (ed.), <i>History and Culture of the Indian People</i> (Bombay, 1955), IV and V.
HI	H. Elliott, <i>History of India</i> . . . (London, 1869), I and II.	Ray	H. C. Ray, <i>The Dynastic History of Northern India</i> (Calcutta, 1931-36), 2 vols.
CHI	W. Haig, <i>The Cambridge History of India</i> (New York, 1928), vol. III.	Cil	S. R. Sharma, <i>The Crescent in India</i> (Bombay, 2nd rev. ed. 1954).
Ikram	S. M. Ikram, <i>Muslim Civilization in India</i> , ed. Ainslie Embree (New York, 1964).	Tripathi	R. S. Tripathi, <i>The History of Kanauj</i> (Banaras, 1937).
		Vaidya	C. V. Vaidya, <i>History of Mediaeval Hindu India</i> (Puna, 1921-26), 3 vols.

DATE (app.) AGGRESSOR	REGION or TOWN	COMMANDER	SOURCE and DETAILS
715 Hindu	Alor	Hullishah al-Muhallab	Ray, I, 8: Hindu army retakes major city from Muslims.
715 Hindu	Mihran	Hullishah al-Muhallab	Ray, I, 8: Muslims stall the Hindu counter-offensive.
718 Hindu	Brahmanabadh	Hullishah al-Muhallab	Al-Baladhuri, II, 225: Hindu attacks resume.
721 Muslim	Brahmanabadh	al-Muhallab Hullishah	Al-Baladhuri, II, 225: Hullishah becomes a Muslim, likely due to military reversals.
725 Muslim	Avanti	Nagabhata I	Ray, I, 9-10: defeat of large Arab expedition against Avanti.
724-740 Muslim	Uzain, Mirmad, Dahnaj, al-Mali- bad, al-Mandal, Barwas, others	Junayd of Sind	Ray, I, 9: raiding India as part of Umayyad Hindu policy.
740 Muslim	Chitore	Mauray of Chitore	Vaidya, II, 73: Hindus repulse an "Arab" seige.
743 Muslim	al-Bailaman, al-Jurz	Junayd	Ray, I, 9: annexed by Muslims.
750 Muslim	Valabhi	Junayd of Sind Nagabhata I	Ray, I, 10: Pratihara capital sacked in Muslim raid.
754-775 Muslim	ar-Rukhkhaj, Kabul, Kandahar, Kashmir	Caliph al-Mansur	Ray, I, 12 and 69: HCIP, IV, 125: heavy raids and sieges but few annexations by Muslims.
778 Muslim	Barabad	Caliph al-Mahdi	HCIP, IV, 98-9: Muslim amphi- bious assault annihilated.
777-782 Muslim	Sijistan	Caliph al-Mahdi	HI, II, 419: Raja of Sijistan made vassal of Caliphate.
780-787 Muslim	Fort Tharra, Bagar, Bhaqmbur	Haji Abu Turab	HI, I, 446: vigorous Muslim offensive captures several important Hindu outposts.
786-791 Muslim	Kabul	Caliph ar-Rashid	HCIP, IV, 125: major Muslim seige effort fails.
<i>9th Century</i>			
800-810 Hindu	Sind border	Nagabhata II Caliph al-Amin	HCIP, IV, 24-5, 126: several Muslim outposts fall to the Pratihara incursions.
810-820 Muslim	Kabul	Caliph al-Mamun Nagabhata II	Ray, I, 70: Kabul falls to Muslims, is then retaken by Hindus but precise dates within decade are unknown.
820-830 Muslim	Fort Sindan	al-Fadl ibn Mahan	Al-Baladhuri, II, 231-3: Sindan captured but Hindu riots make pacification of Sind impossible.

96	SOUTH ASIA		
DATE (app.) AGGRESSOR	REGION or TOWN	COMMANDER	SOURCE and DETAILS
839 Hindu	Fort Sindan	Bhoja	Ray, I, 12-13: Hindus expel Muslim garrison.
845 Hindu	Yavana	Dharmapala	HCIP, IV, 46, 126: Muslim principality becomes vassal of Pratiharas.
845-860 Hindu	Pratihara-Sind	Bhoja	HCIP, IV, 32: uneasy truce between Sind and Rajputana because of great power of Bhoja but infraction likely.
860 Hindu	Rajputana-Sind	Kokkalla I	HCIP, IV, 86: Kalachuri raids into Sind to finance war with Pratihara kingdom.
867 Muslim	Herat	Yacub ibn Layth	Ray, I, 70: Saffarid conquest.
870 Muslim	Kabul	Yacub ibn Layth Lalliya Shahi	Ray, I, 70: Saffarid conquest.
880-900 Muslim	Sijistan	Amr ibn Layth Kamaluka Shahi	Ray, I, 79: HCIP, IV, 111-12: Details scanty but frequent raids by Muslims punctuate this period of Shahi decline.
<i>10th Century</i>			
903-905 Hindu	Kabul region	Shahi dynasty	Ikram, 24: disintegration of Saffarids allows major Hindu military achievements.
905-915 Hindu	Multan region	Mahipala Pratihara	HCIP, IV, 35; EHM, 9-10: series of major but unsuccessful Hindu sieges of Muslim Multan.
940-950 Hindu	Multan region	Pratihara Amir of Multan	EHM, 10-12: evidences of war and reprisals prior to the Qarmatian take-over.
963 Muslim	Alptigin Anuk Lawik	Fort Ghazni	EI ² , II, 1049: Muslims take fort from Hindu or Hindu vassal.
965-973 Muslim	Lamghan	Sabuk-tigin	Ray, I, 80: heavy raiding.
973 Hindu	Ghazna	Sabuk-tigin	Ray, I, 81: Tripathi, 281-2: defeat of Hindu expedition.
973-991 Muslim	Lamghan	Sabuk-tigin Raja Jayapala	Ray, I, 81-4; Tripathi, 282: a long series of engagements results in Muslim annexation of Lamghan and Hindu panic
<i>11th Century</i>			
1001 Muslim	Peshawar	Mahmud Raja Jayapala	Ray, I, 84-7: Mahmud crushes major Hindu confederation.
1004 Muslim	Bhera	Mahmud Bijay Ray	Ray, I, 88: Muslims annex city.

DATE (app.) AGGRESSOR	REGION or TOWN	COMMANDER	SOURCE and DETAILS
1005-1008 Muslim	Panjab	Mahmud Anandapala	Ray, I, 89-91: enormous devastations by Muslim raids.
1009 Muslim	Nagarkot	Mahmud	Ray, I, 93: city razed.
1013 Muslim	Nandanah	Mahmud Trilocanapala	Ray, I, 94-5: city taken.
1014 Hindu	Tosi River	Mahmud Trilocanapala	Ray, I, 95-8: Muslims halted.
1015 Muslim	Lohkot (Lahore)	Mahmud	Ray, I, 136-7: unsuccessful Muslim seige.
1018 Muslim	Kanauj & Baran	Mahmud	Ray, I, 137; II, 598; Tripathi, 282-8: two major Hindu capitals invested.
1021 Muslim	Lohkot (Lahore)	Mahmud	Ray, I, 137-8: second seige also fails.
1022 Muslim	Fort Gwalior	Mahmud Nanda (Bida-688)	Ray, II, 692: fort taken.
1022 Muslim	Fort Kalanjara	Mahmud Nanda (Bida-688)	Ray, II, 692-3: Candella fort stalls Muslim advance.
1025 Muslim	Somanatha	Mahmud	Ray, II, 953-60: city taken.
1033 Muslim	Benares	Ahmed Nialtigin Gangeyadeva Cedi	Tripathi, 292-3: major raid.
1040 Muslim	Thanesar	Majdud Ghazni Tomaras dynasty	Ray, II, 1149: major city taken.
1044 Hindu	Thanesar, Hansi, Kangra	Mahipal of Delhi	CHI, III, 33: grand counter offensive recaptures some ground.
1049 Muslim	above towns	Bu'Ali Hasan	CHI, III, 33: Mahipal forced to give up some reconquests.
1052 Muslim	Fort Kangra	Nushtigin Ghazni Mahipala	CiI, 78: retaken by Muslims.
1060-1075 Muslim	Rupal, Ajudhan, Buria, Sirhind, Dhangan, Fort Darah	Sultan Ibrahim	HCIP, V, 94-5: Muslim conquests.
1079-1081 Muslim	Navasari	Ibrahim	CHI, III, 35: Muslims stall.
1084-1094 Muslim	beyond Ganges	Mahmud ibn Ibrahim	HCIP, V, 94-5: powerful but valueless expeditionary probe.
1099-1115 Muslim	Kanauj	Hajib Tughatigin Madanachandra	HCIP, V, 95: massive raids and sciges after Hindu reconquest bring many marginal victories but Kanauj remains in the hands of the Hindu garrison.

DATE (app.) AGGRESSOR	REGION or TOWN	COMMANDER	SOURCE and DETAILS
<i>12th Century</i>			
1120-1124 Muslim	Nagaur	Muhammed Bahlim	CHI, III, 35-6: massive penetration raid 300 miles south of Lahore.
1125-1160 Hindu	no Data		
1160-1175	Dhillika, Asika, Aryavarta	Vigraharaja	Ray, II, 1077-8: major successes in counter-offensive.
1178 Muslim	Nahrwalah	Muizz ud-Din	Ray, II, 1005: seige fails.
1179 Muslim	Nadol	Muizz Ghuri	Ray, II, 1086: major fort taken.
1182 Hindu	?	Muizz Ghuri	Ray, II, 1087: Muslims halted.
1191 Muslim	Tabarhindah	Muizz Ghuri Ray Kolah Pithora	Ray, II, 1089: Muslim victory annihilates Cahamen dynasty.
1193 Muslim	Bihar & Kanauj	Muhammed Ghuri	Ray, I, 370-1, 542: cities retaken by Muslims.
1197 Muslim	Mt Abu	Qutb ud-Din Ray Kelhana	Ray, II, 1019-20: Nahrwalah falls to Muslims.
<i>13th Century</i>			
1202 Muslim	Fort Kalinjar	Qutb al-Din Ray Parmar	Ray, I, 720-1: fall of fort ends independent Hindu dynasties of Kanauj.
1203 Muslim	Mahoba	Qutb al-Din	Ray, I, 721-2: capital of Kalpi province falls.
1205 Muslim	Brahmaputra area	Muhammed ibn Bakhtyar	Ray, I, 260-3: major Muslim expedition to Tibet a total disaster.
1205 Hindu	Fort Kalinjar	Candellas	Ray, I, 727: fort recaptured.

If culling readily available works can amass such an extensive list, obviously many more raids might be discovered in a more intensive search of the primary sources. Moreover, numerous encounters have probably gone unrecorded and become nameless and forgotten over the centuries.

As Srivastava recognizes, the first clashes in this long war, contrary to the textbook view, occurred at least three-quarters of a century before the conquest of Sind. Thus, in 644 A.D. Arab horsemen appeared in Makran, defeated the local ruler and reached almost to the Indus river before returning to the Umayyad capital with a captured elephant.¹⁰ Within two decades of this raid, the Arabs had full control of Seistan. Arab Muslim horsemen were in direct contact with the mounted armies of the indigenous rulers, the mysterious Zunbil (or Ratbil) and the Kabul Shah. These monarchs and their followers, with whom the Arabs were to battle for the next three centuries, apparently inhabited a predominantly South Asian rather than an

¹⁰ C. E. Bosworth, *Sistan Under the Arabs, from the Islamic Conquest to the Rise of the Saffarids (30-250/651-864)* (Rome, 1968), p. 14.

Iranian cultural realm.¹¹ The most noticeable high cultural religious forms in eastern and southern Afghanistan, i.e. the Kabul valley and the region around Ghazni (Zabulistan) reaching towards Kandahar, were certainly Buddhist and Hindu, not Zoroastrian.¹² Testimony from the Chinese Buddhist pilgrims as well as those archaeological remains excavated to date confirm the strength of Buddhism, especially along the main trade routes. Similar evidence also exists for the presence of *devi* cults in the region.¹³

Recently an argument has also been advanced that the god Zun, the principal deity of the kingdom of the Zunbils (i.e. Zabulistan) was a northern, mountain form of Siva. After analysing the attributes of Zun as portrayed in the Chinese sources, Giuseppe Tucci concludes that "nothing prevents us to believe that Zun(a) / Sun(a) was taken as a form of Siva or an adaptation of Siva to a local god, introduced from India".¹⁴

An as yet unresolved issue is the cultural status of southeastern Afghanistan, where political overlordship prior to the seventh century had fluctuated between Persia and Sind.¹⁵ The absence of serious archaeological work for the historical period in this area has meant that little in the way of material evidence on this question is available. However, a recent reinterpretation of primary literary sources suggests that the cultural dominance of Hindu/Buddhist civilization did stretch to the west beyond the current Irano-Pakistan border. In a reassessment of the travel account of Hiuen Tsiang for the period 629-645 A.D., B. D. Mirchandani has concluded that Baluchistan and Makran as well as border areas in eastern Iran were firmly linked to the South Asian cultural sphere, not the Persian. Here, for example, is part of Hiuen Tsiang's description of Makran, then under Persian rule:

The letters [of Makran] are much the same as those of India: their language is a little different.. There are some hundred *sangharamas* and perhaps 6000 priests . . . there are several hundred Deva temples. . . . In the city is a temple to Mahesvara Deva: it is richly adorned and sculptured.¹⁶

If Mirchandani's reinterpretation of Hiuen Tsiang is supportable, this will further strengthen the view that the earliest Islamic push into the Indian cultural sphere occurred in Afghanistan.

When the frequency of military interaction has been attested, what may we conclude about the intensity of this struggle? That aggressive Muslim kings and warriors were conscious of the drive to India, there can be little doubt. The appeal of Hind as a source of booty and slaves, or as a field for martyrdom for would-be *ghazis* was a recurring theme in the Islamic world. But what of the other side? Here the prevailing view is expressed by Romila Thapar in the first volume of the *Pelican History of India*:

¹¹ Cf. Bosworth's views in "Notes on the Pre-Ghaznavid History of Eastern Afghanistan", *Islamic Quarterly*, IX (1965), 12.

¹² *Ibid.* and cf. Giuseppe Tucci, "Oriental Notes, II: an Image of a Devi Discovered in Swat and Some Connected Problems", *East and West*, N.S. XIV (1963), 146-81.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ Tucci, *op. cit.*, p. 172. G. Scarcia, on the other hand, connects Zun with the Iranian epic figures, Zal and Rustam. However, Scarcia also posits a tie in the pre-Islamic

period with the cult of the god Sharva in Lamghan, a proto-Saivite deity. Scarcia's views are summarized in Bosworth, *Sistan Under the Arabs*, p. 35n.

¹⁵ See B. D. Mirchandani, "Chach-Nama: References to Persia, Zabul, Kashmir and Kanauj", *Journal of Indian History*, XLIII (1965), 369-85.

¹⁶ B. D. Mirchandani, "On Hiuen Tsiang's Travels in Baluchistan", *Journal of Indian History*, LXV (1967), 330.

Northern India had had a long period of respite from foreign aggression. The impact of the Huns had been forgotten and the thrusts of the Arabs were easily countered. For over four centuries the campaigns and battles were internal. Minor bickerings were magnified into major causes for endless campaigns which devoured the funds and energy of each dynasty. The image of politics was created and chiselled by local happenings.¹⁷

The impression given is that of a generally complacent society in north India, which failed to perceive any particular threat from Muslim armies and kings in the north-west. When such entities did appear, according to this view, they were regarded as simply one more participant in the swirling pattern of internal conflict.

Certainly, if one possible response or reaction, that of the inter-state defensive alliance against external invasion, is considered, the leaders of north India's kingdoms do present an image of complacency and ignorance. With the possible exception of the great hosts assembled at the battles of Tarain, no examples of such wide alliances can be found. Still, to expect coordinated and sustained military operations to be carried out by the fragmented kings and chiefs of north India is somewhat unrealistic. It is unlikely that anything less than a highly centralized state could mount a successful military defense over a frontier as large as that in the north-west. That the Sultans of Delhi could erect successful defenses against the Mongols in the thirteenth century is a testimonial to centralization and organization rather than to greater perspicacity.

Yet nothing in the decentralized political order precluded a growing awareness of Muslim military pressure and of the consequences of defeat, at least among those groups, Kshatriyas and Brahmins, who had the most to lose. (Steadily deteriorating morale among these groups might well offer a partial explanation for the debacle in the Ganges valley in the early thirteenth century.) Consider this striking assessment by an informed observer from the other side of the frontier, Al Biruni, whose vantage point was Ghazni in the first half of the eleventh century:

But then came Islam: the Persian empire perished, and the repugnance of the Hindus against foreigners increased more and more when the Muslims began to make their inroads into their country; for Muhammad Ibn Elkasim Ibn Elmunabih entered Sind. . . . All these events planted a deeply rooted hatred in their hearts.

Now in the following times no Muslim conqueror passed beyond the frontier of Kabul and the river Sindh until the days of the Turks, when they seized the power in Ghazna under the Samani dynasty, and the supreme power fell to the lot of Nasiraddaula Sabuktigin. This prince chose the holy war as his calling, and therefore called himself Al-ghazi [i.e. warring on the road to Allah]. In the interest of his successors he constructed, in order to weaken the Indian frontier, those roads on which afterwards his son Yamin-addaula Mahmud marched into India during a period of thirty years and more. God be merciful to both father and son! Mahmud utterly ruined the prosperity of the country, and performed there wonderful exploits, by which the Hindus became like atoms of dust scattered in all directions, and like a tale of old in the mouth of the people. Their scattered remains cherish, of course, the most inveterate aversion towards all Muslims. This is the reason, too, why Hindu sciences have retired far away from those parts of the country conquered by us, and have fled to places which our hand cannot yet

¹⁷ Romila Thapar, *A History of India* (Harmondsworth, 1968), I, 235.

reach, to Kashmir, Benares, and other places. And there the antagonism between them and all foreigners receives more and more nourishment both from political and religious sources.¹⁸

If Al Biruni is correct, by the eleventh century Muslim aggression had evoked fear, hostility, and hatred on the part of those subjected to it. Many Brahmin scholars had migrated to centres remote from the military zone in order to avoid what they saw as a threat and a danger.

Somewhat later, similar emotions engendered among Hindu warriors formed the basis for a Hindu "epic of resistance". Possibly originating as early as the thirteenth century, the Rajput bardic literature constituted a literary expression of the spirit of resistance. Perhaps the most important example of this genre is the Prithvi Raj cycle of Hindi poems, in several versions, arising from Rajput battles with Muhammad of Ghur. By the seventeenth century in its evolved form, according to Aziz Ahmad, the "anti-Muslim epic content goes far beyond the tragic situation of a single historical event, and weaves around it an accumulated arena of heroic resistance spreading over several centuries and anachronistically telescoping within the time and space of Ghurid invasions the eponymous representatives of later ethnic groups of Muslim invaders".¹⁹ Another epic legend celebrates the battles of Raja Hammir Dev (*circa* 1300 A.D.) against Alauddin Khilji. These and other Hindi epics crystallized the combined emotions of pride and despair for warriors who for generations had maintained their honour but were ultimately defeated. They stand in sharp contrast to the Muslim heroic narratives in Persian which celebrated victory and triumph. The Hindu epic of defeat serves as an unconnected, but parallel form to the Muslim genre of victory, "each confronting the other in aggressive hostility".²⁰

If the resistance offered by indigenous warriors was dogged, presumptively self-conscious, and at times successful, why then did the Muslims ultimately win? Why and how was the gradient of military success always tilted against the defenders of the subcontinent? A simple answer to that question, one favoured by late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century historians, was that the Turks and other Central Asian groups were superior in horsemanship and mounts to their Rajput opponents; that the Rajputs, furthermore, relied overmuch on war elephants which were really a liability rather than an asset on the field of battle. Both assertions have been challenged by Simon Digby, whose brief monograph, *War Horse and Elephant in the Delhi Sultanate: A Study of Military Supplies* (Oxford, 1971), is one of the most useful works on medieval Indian history to appear in the past decade. Digby argues that there is no evidence to support the idea that the Rajputs were less familiar or skilful with horses for mounted combat. Records of specific battles, such as the first battle of Tarain, show that they were clearly formidable cavalrymen. If the horse was a major element in Turkish culture, so it was in Rajput culture: "the standard bull and horseman coinage of . . . north Indian rulers must reflect equestrian ideals".²¹ The only possible advantage open to the Muslims lay in easier access to the great horse-breeding grounds of the Central Asian steppe. Still, as Digby comments, there is no reason to suppose that access to the Central Asian horse markets was completely closed to the Rajputs at any time.

¹⁸ Edward C. Sachau (ed.), *Alberuni's India* (New Delhi, 1964 reprint), pp. 21-2.

¹⁹ Aziz Ahmad, "Epic and Counter-Epic in Medieval India", *Journal of the American*

Oriental Society, LXXXIII (1963), 473.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 470.

²¹ Digby, *op. cit.*, p. 13n.

Modern historians might doubt the utility of the war elephant, but contemporary rulers and commanders did not. The armoured war elephant was indispensable in the line of battle prior to the arrival of firearms. Elephants also had great symbolic value for royal and imperial power. As Digby points out, Hindu rulers were not alone in their use of elephants; Muslim rulers were equally eager to deploy the enormous beasts. Both the Ghaznavids and the Ghurids, as well as later dynasties at Delhi, went to great trouble and expense to obtain elephants for their war stables.

The central thesis of Digby's monograph is directed at explaining the expansion of the Delhi Sultanate in the fourteenth century, not earlier Muslim victories. Digby suggests that the Sultans of Delhi consistently won battles because their control of military supplies was superior to that of the Hindu rajas who were their enemies. Put very simply, the Sultans of Delhi could acquire, maintain, and deploy far larger numbers of battle horses and elephants than any other rulers on the subcontinent. Control of the agrarian production of the Indo-Gangetic plain gave the Sultans immense resources. Their economic reach is illustrated by the fact that in the fourteenth century the Mongols of Russia's Golden Horde sent herds of horses from their steppes to the horse markets at Delhi.

Perceptive as it is, however, Digby's work does not supply an alternative explanation for Islamic expansion before the conquest of Delhi. The tempo of conquest accelerated after the occupation of Delhi, but the spectacular territorial gains of the fourteenth century can only be understood as one episode in a continuing, long-term process. Digby's analysis does suggest that no readily apparent difference in military weaponry, tactics and strategy existed before, as well as after, 1192 A.D. Nor, as Aziz Ahmad's review of the two epic traditions reveals, was there any discernible difference in the seriousness with which each side approached the struggle. Why then, could the Rajput rulers of the eleventh and twelfth centuries not mobilize resources on the same scale as the Sultans of Delhi who succeeded them? If phrased in this way the question becomes essentially one of differential political and military centralization, or Rajput versus Turkish politics. That there were differences between the Rajput and Turkish warrior ethics and attitudes toward warfare is certainly the case. Whether these were significant in this conflict is not at all certain.

As conquering armies pushed the military/political frontier into the subcontinent, another process of assimilation occurred under the protection of the new Muslim states. Political control encouraged internal expansion or Islamization. The latter may be defined as substantial growth in the numbers of Muslims in a specified area and the appearance of specifically Muslim institutions serving the needs of the community.²² Extension of the external frontier of Islam into what is today Afghanistan, Pakistan and Kashmir has brought about virtually complete Islamization in these regions. From as early as the Ghaznavid period the greater number of the inhabitants of these regions had converted to Islam until today the process is nearly complete. Furthermore as the Muslim population grew, so did those institu-

²² Cf. P. M. Holt's distinction between the "external frontier" of Islam "which has largely been the creation of conquering armies" and the "internal frontier" or "the invisible line of division between Muslim and non-Muslim". The cultural synthesis resulting from this process has created a distinctive Islamic civilization in South Asia

and elsewhere. P. M. Holt (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Islam* (Cambridge, 1970) II, xix. For a full historical study of the process of Islamization in another area, see Speros Vryonis, Jr., *The Decline of Medieval Hellenism in Asia Minor and the Process of Islamization from the Eleventh through the Fifteenth Century* (Berkeley, 1971).

tions which perpetuated Islam. Muslim rulers founded mosques for public prayer and preaching; appointed judges and tribunals to administer the civil and criminal law of Islam; established colleges for training men in the Holy Law and the peculiarly Islamic arts and sciences (e.g. the chanting of the Koran) and founded pious trusts (*wakf*) to supply revenues for the support of these institutions.

The long term effects of conquest in the areas west of the Indus River and in the mountain valleys of the Himalayas are well known, for these have long been exclusively Muslim societies. But what of the areas to the east and south which did not undergo extreme Islamization? In the remainder of South Asia which came under some form of Muslim political domination, the majority of the indigenous population (save for eastern Bengal or Bangladesh) remained outside the Islamic community. For scholars concerned with the history of this area under Islamic states, two major concerns have been dominant. First, several generations of South Asian and European scholars have laboured to extract from the surviving chronicles (mainly those from the Muslim side written in Persian), epigraphs and coins, a coherent narrative of political developments. One of the most impressive contributions to this essential effort was that of A. B. M. Habibullah, in his *Foundation of Muslim Rule in India* (Lahore, 1945). In this work, which appeared nearly thirty years ago, Habibullah constructed a meticulous picture of the thirteenth-century expansion and retraction of the military frontier between Turks and Rajputs in the Indo-Gangetic plain. Habibullah's painstaking detail reveals just how precarious the Turkish hold on Delhi actually was and how determined were Rajput defenses in the first century after Tarain. The latest summary of this political and administrative narrative may be found in the new *Cambridge History of Islam*.²³ I. H. Qureshi, in a concise, lucid essay, supplies a basic narrative for the Muslim venture in South Asia from the Ghaznavids to the Mughals. Although well done, Qureshi's summary is an excellent example of the limitations of this approach. (It is also worth noting that he also has foreshortened the narrative by beginning with the Ghaznavids rather than the Arabs.)

A second prominent line of research has given us materials for understanding the growth of Indo-Muslim society. Scholars such as K. A. Nizami, Aziz Ahmad and others have documented and described the evolution of various Islamic institutions, both orthodox and unorthodox, under the Sultans of Delhi in the north, and the Bahmani rulers and their successors in the Deccan. Perhaps the best recent synthesis of this research (and the fruits of the author's own long years of study) may be found in Muhammad Mujeeb's *The Indian Muslims*. The latter work offers one of the most penetrating and comprehensive discussions of the configuration of Indo-Muslim society yet to appear in English.

A new development in this research effort is K. S. Lal's study of the demographic history of Indo-Muslims. For the first time, in his *Growth of Muslim Population in Medieval India* (New Delhi, 1973) Lal has systematically compiled all possible references to population and human numbers from the corpus of written sources. From these fragmentary materials he has tried to reconstruct the rate and mode of increase for the pre-modern Muslim population. Lal first attempts to set a figure for the total population of India and for the number of Muslims within that population for each of five bench mark years two hundred years apart: 1000; 1200; 1400; 1600; and 1800 A.D. In 1000 A.D., apart from the Ghaznavid domains in the

²³ P. M. Holt (ed.), *op. cit.*, II, 3-34.

northwest, the total number of Muslims in South Asia was "almost microscopic". Lal concludes that the communities of Arab traders living on the coasts and occasional Sufis scattered in the interior could not have been numerous either absolutely or relatively to the total population.²⁴ Two hundred years later, despite numerous conversions encouraged by the Ghaznavid rulers, the total number of Muslims was probably still small. Between 1192 and 1210 the Ghurid campaigns may have added considerable numbers through migration and settlement of Muslim soldiers and the conversion of war captives. But Lal estimates that this could have raised the total to no more than two to three hundred thousand persons. The primary impetus to growth came with the expansion of the Delhi Sultanate. By 1400 A.D. of a total population estimated (from the revenues figures of the Sultanate) at 170 million on the subcontinent, Lal concludes that the number of Muslims had risen to approximately 3.2 million. By 1600 the total number of Muslims had grown to 15 million, or as much as one-ninth of the total population of the subcontinent.

An unavoidable difficulty with these figures is that they are little more than guesses. For example, Lal did not build up his Muslim population estimate for 1400 from data contained in the contemporary sources. Such data is simply not in existence. Instead, Lal worked from his estimate for 1200. In casting about for a means to estimate the possible rate of increase of the Indo-Muslim population, from the British Census of India he discovered that between 1881 and 1941 the overall rate of increase for the Muslim population was approximately 100 per cent despite sharp fluctuations in the rate per decade. Lal then extrapolated this rate and applied it to the two centuries between 1200 and 1400. He concludes:

It has been estimated earlier that there were about four hundred thousand Muslims in India in A.D. 1200. If their numbers became double in sixty to seventy years, they would have been about 3.2 million in 1400. The total population of India in 1400 has been estimated at 170 million. The Muslims would have been about 1.8 per cent of the total population with 50 to 53 Hindus to one Muslim.²⁵

Clearly any quantitative statement arrived at by this method is worth no more than the impression of an experienced historian familiar with the period. Indeed, in spite of a lengthy statistical diversion, this is precisely what Lal gives us: a Muslim/Hindu ratio based far more on his insights than on the shaky formula which he utilizes.

Lal has equal difficulty in arriving at firm numbers when he discusses other kinds of increase for the Muslim community. Immigration was a major contributor to growth. Merchants, travelling jurists and scholars, and above all soldiers and warriors attracted by the war in Hind were among Muslim migrants who settled in India. The Mongol incursion added a stream of refugees seeking shelter in Delhi after 1220. Although any attempt to arrive at a precise estimate of numbers of migrants is virtually impossible.

The other primary mode of increase was that of conversion of non-Muslims (at least prior to 1400 A.D.). In his most important and controversial conclusion, Lal argues that most conversions were essentially forced, not voluntary. War captives and slaves, who were subjected to a range of direct and indirect pressures, were the most significant source of converts in this early period. Numerous specific references in the chronicles show that the Sultans of Delhi maintained a systematic policy of

²⁴ Lal, *op. cit.*, pp. 100-1. A mid-eleventh century attack and general massacre of the Muslims of Cambay left a total of only

eighty persons dead.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 126.

either killing or enslaving captives taken in war. Men, women and children were employed as domestic slaves in the enormous households maintained by the nobles of the Sultanate. Often captured women were married to Muslims or placed in concubinage, where presumably they and their children became converts. In other words, one of the most productive forms of population increase was directly linked to the military successes of the Islamic state.

Lal suggests that voluntary conversions were somewhat less important in adding to the numbers of Muslims. He points out that Sufis were probably not as important as we have believed in making conversions, for "not many reliable references to their proselytizing activity are available in the genuine hagiological works".²⁶ He also minimizes the importance of group conversions on the part of low and untouchable caste groups in search of better treatment in a more egalitarian social order. Lal concedes that such events did occur, but suggests that these lower caste changeovers did not result from the social attractions of Islam, but as a result of "professional and vocational compulsions" for butchers, tailors and others. In Bengal the best evidence available supports the view that Sufis who attached themselves to holy places of long-standing local sanctity were the primary instruments of Islami-zation. Yet Lal has also stressed, in a weak argument, the militant stance of warrior-Sufis in Bengal and the aggressive proselytizing of Muslim rulers in that area as of greater significance than the more pacific approach of dispersed Sufi mystics. In his analysis of the diffusion of Islam in Bengal, Lal reveals his unwillingness to accept even the most modestly favourable view of Islam. Throughout his analysis, and the entire book, is a disturbing lack of sympathy for his subject. Islam, for the author, appears to have been something unattractive into which people were born or to which they had to be forced or coerced. No credence is given the great attractive power of Islam—one of the most vital and expansive of the world religions.

Nevertheless, in spite of what appears to be an anti-Muslim bias, Lal's stress on the importance of slavery and war captivity as a mechanism for inducing conversion is well worth considering. The older view of mass conversions by the sword has long been rejected, but we should not overlook the powers of persuasion of the Muslim state, especially in view of the fact that we have little evidence for widespread or systematic proselytizing on the part of Muslims. Moreover, growth in the numbers of Muslims has been closely dependent upon, and coterminous with, Islamic territorial expansion and the vitality of the state. Certainly, this interpretation is congruent with the conclusions of Alessandro Bausani who argues that "mass conversion" to Islam unlike Christianity or other monotheistic religions has historically followed "the assumption of power by a Muslim elite".²⁷ Conversions first occur because of external pressures. The first generation of converts, consequently, are not such ardent believers, but "their adoption of the new outward law [i.e. the Sharia] and customs is easily controllable and thereafter succeeding generations have their faith strengthened and deepened by means of the Sufis whose primary task this is".²⁸

If gaps and inadequacies exist in our knowledge of the growth of Indo-Muslim society, we know far less about the consequences of Islamic rule for indigenous society in those regions not overwhelmingly converted. Various exclusive reactions obviously occurred. The spread of *pardah* and the tightening of rules of caste ex-

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 118.

²⁷ Alessandro Bausani, "Can Monotheism Be Taught?" *Numen*, X (1963), 184. I am

indebted to Dr Peter Hardy for this reference.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

clusion fall into this category of change. However, other responses and changes are not as well known.

Irfan Habib has suggested that a cluster of technological developments—some truly surprising—accompanied Islamic expansion into South Asia.²⁹ Wide-spread manufacture and use of paper was one by-product of Muslim rule. The changeover from less durable, less convenient and far heavier materials such as palm leaves must have had stimulating cultural and economic effects. Diffusion of the Persian wheel into north India from the Middle East also had important economic repercussions for agriculture. The Persian wheel improved on the indigenous bucket chain already in use for irrigation by the application of a gearing mechanism which allowed animal power to be employed in drawing water. Additional power meant that water could be raised in quantity from deeper wells. Habib infers from this fact that increasing use of the Persian wheel must have made a general improvement in the scope and intensity of irrigation in the Panjab and western Uttar Pradesh.

Habib also argues that there is no evidence for the existence of the spinning wheel in India before the Islamic occupation. Some positive evidence does exist that the spinning wheel came into common use about the thirteenth century A.D. apparently as another by-product of intensified interaction with the Middle East. Similarly, adoption of the roller-type wooden cotton gin, operated by a crank handle, or its alternative, a bowstring device used for carding cotton, accompanied the Muslim conquests. Each of these three labour-saving devices must have encouraged greater production of cloth, and probably greater consumption of cloth as well. Utilization of these mechanical aids would have had its greatest effect on production of the coarser and cheaper varieties of cotton cloth worn by the ordinary population.

Other alterations in material culture and technology also appeared at this time. For example, a specifically Muslim style of forging and shaping swords gradually displaced the indigenous Rajput styles, even for Hindu warriors. In his book, *The Indian Sword* (London, 1968), P. S. Rawson describes the supplanting of the straight-bladed round pointed Rajput *khanda* by the graceful, backward-curving Muslim *talwar*. Rawson assumes that this was probably a later development, associated with the founding of the Mughal empire, since no positive proof exists that the *talwar* was in wide use prior to the fifteenth century. No definitive pictorial representations of the *talwar* have yet been found which can be firmly dated before 1400. But this may well be due to the general lack of surviving paintings from the Sultanate period. It is as likely that diffusion of the *talwar* (inspired by a Mongol prototype) could have begun much earlier than 1400. Recurring battles between attacking Mongols and defending Turks in the Panjab could have been the context for adoption of the *talwar* by the warriors of the Delhi Sultanate. The latter's motivation for the changeover is obscure. Rawson does not discuss the military efficiency of the *talwar* as compared with the *khanda* in any detail. He does comment that "the Islamic swords of India were superb cutting instruments" and that their longer curved blades were "partly . . . for use from horseback".³⁰ Thus utility concentrated power to penetrate the defenses of rural society and extract a land tax of far greater magnitude than ever before.³¹ This "great systematization of

²⁹ Irfan Habib, "Technological Changes and Society, 13th and 14th Centuries", Presidential Address, Medieval India Section, 31st Session of the Indian History Congress, Varanasi, December 1969.

³⁰ Rawson, *op. cit.*, p. 23.

³¹ Irfan Habib, "The Social Distribution of Landed Property in pre-British India", *Enquiry*, N.S., II (Winter, 1965), 45.

as well as cultural imitation or aesthetic appeal may have been responsible for the diffusion of the *talwar*.

Muslim conquest inevitably brought with it sharp political and social alterations. Indigenous society could not remain frozen or static after 1200. By whatever indices we care to employ, the concentration of state power in a single centre under the Sultans of Delhi was virtually unprecedented in the history of the subcontinent since Mauryan times. Irfan Habib, in an assessment of pre-Muslim and Muslim agrarian systems, argues that also unprecedented was the intrusive use of that agrarian exploitation" benefited and supported new social groups. A new Muslim ruling class derived its authority and power from the Sultan, rather than from hereditary possession of prescriptive rights over particular parts of the countryside. Nobles, administrators and military commanders who held *iqtas* (i.e. temporary rights to levy the land tax in a specified administrative subdivision) were essentially urban dwellers whose residences were located in the growing cities of the period. A new body of specialized grain merchants (*karvanis*, *banjaras*) also appeared. These bought grain in the countryside and transported it to city markets so that the peasants could meet the state's demand for cash payment of the land tax.

Simultaneously, the older ruling stratum, the "defeated and subjugated aristocracies" of the plains of north India began to feel the effects of the new order. At first, the *rais*, *ranas* and *rawars* mentioned in the Muslim chronicles were treated as tributary chiefs and allowed a large degree of internal autonomy over their domains. However, by the end of the thirteenth century these chiefs came under increasing pressure from the Delhi state. By the time of Alauddin Khilji's revenue reforms, the state had begun to deal directly with a second more numerous group of headmen (*khuts*, *chaudhuris* and *muqaddams*) who ruled groups of villages. At this point began an extended levelling process arising from state intervention in rural society. Descendants of *ranas* and *rais* lost power and status as the state bypassed them and left them isolated. In some instances they were reduced to the position of headmen; in others they retained internal control but lost part of their territories.

An accompanying, little understood development appears to have been the compacting of a variety of warrior subcastes and lineages, which together made up the former rural aristocracy, into a general omnibus category, the Rajput:

A very interesting development . . . appears to be the social consolidation of this superior rural class, through the absorption of its various elements, as clans or sub-castes, into the great Rajput caste over the larger part of Northern India. Both the term Rajput (*Rajputra*) as name for the caste, and the sense of the unity of its components, appear suddenly in the Persian authorities of the 16th century, and must, therefore, have quietly evolved in the preceding period.³²

This arresting interpretation, if supported by further research, will drastically alter our existing understanding of the composition of an important stratum of pre-Mughal north Indian society, the Rajputs, and their origins; and the true impact of the Muslim state.

Another paradoxical result of the Muslim incursion was to extend the territorial reach of Hindu political control into areas previously left to so-called "aboriginal"

³² *Ibid.*, p. 54.

or non-Hindu tribal groups and rulers. The first Muslim sweep across the Indo-Gangetic plain in the early thirteenth century gave the invading armies control of the key towns and fortresses along the Ganges valley, but little more than that. Throughout the succeeding two centuries Muslim pressure generated outward from these strongpoints, pushed Rajput (or proto-Rajput) and other Hindu warrior groups or lineages north towards the Himalayas and south toward central India. As a result Hindu chiefs carried out, contemporaneously with the Muslim advance, a diffuse process of conquest in the wider and more remote areas of Hindustan. During this dispersal, extending over two or three centuries, migratory Rajput chiefs and their following killed, drove off, or subjugated the non-Hindu tribal inhabitants of these regions. K. N. Singh, the historical geographer, is among the first scholars to study this phenomenon seriously.³³ Unfortunately, as yet his sources are restricted to that information found in local histories compiled by British administrators and gazetteer writers of the mid- and late-nineteenth century, i.e. summaries of family histories gathered from local chiefs and other informants. However, the possibility exists that what is now very sketchy archaeological evidence, consisting primarily of unexcavated mounds and other unstudied remains, might yield supporting evidence for the dispersal of the Rajputs into these formerly tribal refuge areas.

Beneath the canopy of Islamic control other Hindu groups were also in motion during the Sultanate period. M. C. Pradhan in *The Political System of the Jats of Northern India* (Bombay, 1966) has reconstructed the territorial expansion of a Jat clan in the *doab* region just east of Delhi. Two villages in Meerut district were first colonized by the founders of the clan who had migrated from the Panjab about 1150 A.D., i.e. before the Muslim victory. By 1500 the area dominated by the clan had grown to as many as 84 villages. For more than three centuries "territorial expansion, conquest and colonization of the present *khap* [clan] area continued" unchecked by the Muslim rulers of Delhi.³⁴ As was the case with the other Jat lineages in the area, this clan had its own kinship based political system, its own militia and its own concept of political authority. When the Delhi state was strong the Jats paid taxes and tribute; when the Delhi state was weak the Jats mustered their forces and defended themselves against raiders and predators of all types. Pradhan's startling portrait of the autonomy and aggressive expansionism of the Jats is based on original documents and chronicles still in the possession of the clan at its present headquarters in Meerut district. By means of this fresh perspective we see the self-sufficient operation of local society in an area remarkably close to Delhi. The total impression gained of the Jats and of Muslim rule is very different from that given by historians who have relied primarily on the Muslim chroniclers.

Compelling as Pradhan's materials are, the question of authenticity remains. Apparently, the clan documents have not been subjected to rigorous scrutiny by any scholar other than Pradhan himself. Moreover, it is not entirely clear whether the actual clan documents are extant or whether later eighteenth- and nineteenth-

³³ R. L. Singh and K. N. Singh, "Evolution of the Medieval Towns in the Saryu-par Plain of the Middle Ganga Valley: a Case Study", *The National Geographical Journal of India*, IX (1963), 1-11; and K. N. Singh, "The Territorial Basis of Medieval Town

and Village Settlement in Eastern Uttar Pradesh, India" *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, LVIII (1968), 203-19.

³⁴ Pradhan, *op. cit.*, p. 95.

century summaries and compendia are all that remain.³⁵ If possible, all these documents should be reviewed by a number of historians, and their contents and form checked for authenticity. Particular references to wider events and developments should be collated with the known facts from other reliable sources. Only after this procedure is completed can we begin to accept statements such as these:

During Muslim rule the *khap* . . . councils became champions for protecting religious faith. The call to defend religion brought the Hindu castes and communities of the *khap* . . . areas under the banner of these councils. This unity enabled the councils to act as one and to raise large armies to defend the area and to put up an effective resistance against the Muslim invasions.³⁶

Those photographic reproductions of documents supplied in the volume do not provide any reassurance on the issue of authenticity. None of the clan documents is reproduced; instead several photographs of Persian documents issued to the clan by the Mughal emperors have been included. Unfortunately these documents do not on the face of it appear to be genuine. In calligraphy and form, in language and terminology they do not compare with other authentic copies of imperial *farmans* which we do possess.³⁷

³⁵ The samples of clan records which appear in an appendix were drawn from an eighteenth-century chronicle compiled by Pandit Kaha-Rambhat. See *ibid.*, p. 252n.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 98.

³⁷ Cf. the *farman* of Jahangir reproduced in B. N. Goswamy and J. S. Grewal *The Mughals and the Jogs of Jakhbar* (Simla,

1967), pp. 76-81, with the document opposite p. 113 in Pradhan, *op. cit.* The latter, also presumed to be a *farman* from Jahangir, is either a copy, a summary of the original order, or a badly done forgery. The *tughra* is missing; the seal and the epithets of the Emperor, as well as the language employed do not appear genuine.